

What's That Awful Smell?


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Lesson focus: improvisation (speech, rhythmic, or melodic)

Suggested grade level: 2nd

1. Begin by reading the book What's That Awful Smell? by Heather Tekavec. On each page turn, sing the following text to the melody of MFC Volume IV pg. 4 #1. By the end of the book, students will know the text and melody well.

We are searching near and far
What's that smell? It's so bizarre!
Is it here? Is it there?
We are searching near and far

- a. I changed the starting pitch to F so the vocal range would be D-B.
 - b. I also changed the melody of m. 7 to match that of m. 1 in order to simplify for children.
2. Students get with a partner or small group to create a list of things that might have an awful smell. Remind them to stay away from "bathroom humor." ☺ Give suggestions only if they need them—they'll no doubt come up with some great ideas!
 3. Each group selects one answer to share aloud with the class. Ask "What's that awful smell?"  (Include playing on hand drum or tubano if you'd like). Students respond one group at a time with their "stinky" ideas.
 - a. Be sure not to stress too much about them speaking their response rhythmically or within a certain number of beats...yet. Just let them share their ideas without pressure.
 - b. If/when a group responds rhythmically, really highlight that and encourage other groups to do the same.
 4. Create a rondo by reviewing and adding back in the song as an A section, then incorporating the question/answer speech (2 or 4 Q/A's each time) as a B section. By this time, students should be responding rhythmically. If not, help them out.
 5. Extension: You can easily turn this into a nonpitched percussion or barred instrument improvisation activity as well, by having students keep the text "in their heads" while playing the rhythm on instruments. Be sure to give plenty of time for this evolution, especially if you're doing it with second graders!